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A Holiday from the Facts: Utopia, Pain, and Creativity

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Soyez bénifié, mon Dieu, qui donnez la souffrance  
Comme un divin remède à nos impuretés  
Et comme la meilleure et la plus pure essence  
Qui prépare les forts aux saintes voluptés!

Je sais que vous gardez une place au Poète  
Dans les rangs bienheureux des saintes Légions,  
Et que vous l'invitez à l'éternelle fête  

Je sais que la douleur est la noblesse unique  
Où ne mordront jamais la terre et les enfers,  
Et qu'il faut pour tresser ma couronne mystique  
Imposer tous les temps et tous les univers.

Be blessed, my God, who grants suffering  
As a divine remedy against our impurities  
And as the best and purest essence  
Who prepares the strong for holy pleasures!

I know that you set aside a place for the Poet  
In the blessed ranks of the holy Legions,  
And you invite him to the eternal celebration  
Of the Thrones, Virtues, and Dominations.

I know that pain is the sole nobility  
Which earth and the underworld will never bite,  
And that to braid my mystical crown  
You must impose all the times and universes.
Introduction

This project came to light in the hopes of trying to grasp how literature and philosophy tackle the quest for human perfection. This inherently impossible pursuit has been the source of much research and imagination, gave birth to the utopian literary genre. In each constructed society, there is a cost for the stability afforded; and the price is one’s freedom. The freedom at stake is not the idealistic American notion of freedom which will guide this work, but that freedom which is central to our humanness and its ability to allow for pain in our lives that is the most exciting aspect. The flight from freedom-induced pain is central to self-preservation, but without it, how do we appreciate the good? How can we distinguish the authentic from the imitation, the boredom of stasis versus the stimulation of self-conscious choice; without the pangs of guilt or self-consciousness?

Utopia, comes from Greek *ou* "not" and *topos* "place," creating a fantastical atmosphere inherent to the category. How can a “not-place” be realized? Utopias never claim to be real, as their etymology proves; the goal is not practicality but something *hors1*-human towards which to strive. Utopias, ultimately, were the impetus for the creation of dystopian literature. While using different means, both genres search for a way to push readers to understand the need for substantial social change. What made utopias far less successful is their esoteric nature.

On the other hand, dystopias capitalize on an aspect of real life that can be projected as going awry and expand on this fear as the incentive for significant social change. Exhibiting the

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1 Meaning outside or beyond in French
catatonic future is a fascinating tool that exploded in the 20th century, as the number of dystopias written at this time rose exponentially. What incited this surge? The first half of the 20th century felt the brunt of the two world wars which was followed by oppression and the rise of totalitarian regimes. The driving force for writing dystopian works is evident: the state of the future was uncertain, and what better way to make sense of it all, than by exploring through this literary genre.

If creating a work of fiction can help make sense of the current world, then the genre can shed light on what should be improved and what drives humans. Pain is the leading motivator in our lives. The fear intrinsically linked to its effects pushes one to attempt to avoid pain entirely. But without pain, how could one appreciate the rebuilding and regrowth after such terrible destruction? The cyclical nature of the system of birth and pain is what makes our world balanced. In part, to stay afloat in this “divinely” counterbalance, it is imperative that one use the pain as a lifejacket. As Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* proposes, pain can be a tool to remind one of the freedoms they have. In *La chute*, the main character Clamence utilizes his pain to help him realize the inauthenticity of his life. And finally, to remedy the sting of life’s suffering, Nietzsche proposes art and philosophy.

Nevertheless, the yearn to depict a painless world has not narrowed. In light of these works that beg their readers not to artificially numb their pain, Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* illustrates what true painlessness would look like. To implement such a, while fictional, non-counterbalanced social structure, problems were bound to arise. The World State is built upon eugenicist practices, massive social stratification, sleep-teaching, and finally a system of pain-numbing that is completely normalized. Humans aren’t naturally able to fit into “idealized”
communities, and, as Karl Popper explains, attempting to do so would lead to detrimental social engineering, transforming a utopian structure into a dystopian reality.

This project is centered around the concept that the ability to create that serves writers so that they may breakdown myths, keeps pain’s burden at bay through arts inherent shareability. “Every creative encounter is a search for the partial resolution of a ‘problem’” (Zinker 9). The necessity to cultivate and utilize falsehoods to preserve delicate elements of the human existence is part of what makes mythologization a pillar of our world. But the problem that pushed one to create to solve it, “…establishes [a] friendliness with all the polarized forces within [the artist, bringing him] to experience his wholeness. Finally, the person transforms his dilemma into a concrete product of act” (Zinker 15). The concrete nature of creation grounds the projections and fears that roll around in our heads. “Every person is pregnant with [these] projections, yet fearful of the frightening delight of fully expressing them” (Zinker 14). While promoting these fables is an act of bad faith, they serve to help mitigate life’s pains and revel in the “delight of …expressing them.” Suffering, must cease to be feared, or at least not so to the extent that it is today; for this driving force gives way to art, the remedy of all remedies.

As Joseph Zinker, in Creative Process in Gestalt Therapy, notes, “Art is prayer—not the vulgarized notations handed down to us in the scriptures, but a fresh, vital discovery of one’s own special presence in the world. Marc Chagall was once asked if he attended a synagogue; he answered that his work is prayer” (16). The divine often parallels the experience of true artistic expression. It is the sublime, birthed from misfortune and grief. In itself, art is divine. Exerting one’s freedom to accept false values, like Clamence in La chute, is acting in bad faith; but the suffering artist myth protects pain from being destroyed by the deeply rooted human fear of it. Fear, the driving force for social change in dystopias also pushes humans to want to rid
themselves of pain, the most human aspect of their life. This myth, as I will show through Arthur Rimbaud, is a falsehood that must be deconstructed. But breaking apart the fable of the artist in pain, as I propose should be done, does not necessitate the destruction of the myth in its entirety. Showcasing the framework of the tale that granted mere humans a sanctuary from pain, helps relieve the intrinsic fear gives up insights into what fuels not only the archetype but what allows for it to keep its truth intact. If it was revealed that there was no reason for the misery life brings. As Nietzsche predicts, mass nausea and suicide would soon follow. In this project, I will write about how *Brave New World, Notes from Underground, The Gay Science*, and *La chute* help keep the myth of the suffering artist alive and serve to offer remedies and comfort in times of suffering. This step necessitates the deconstruction of the myth, which I will do through Arthur Rimbaud’s duplicitous life. Nonetheless, it is through the sharing of pain through the act of creation that, not only keeps the myth alive but inspires mankind to be “utopian” in their goals, without the desire to rid their lives of pain.
Chapter 1: Life and Pain

This first section will showcase the imperative role pain plays in life. I will bring Fyodor Dostoevsky’s work *Notes from Underground* into conversation with Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*, and Albert Camus’ *La chute*. Dostoevsky introduces the reader to his character the underground man, a grouchy and unpleasant man, who highlights that to feel pain is proof of one’s free will. Looking at pain from a different angle, Nietzsche claims that art and philosophy can serve as the remedy for a sufferer. And finally, Camus’ main character, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, attempts to run from his painful duality in a foreign city, but his *mauvaise foi* keeps him from following the underground man or Nietzsche’s theories on how to cope with life’s innate suffering. Camus’ Clamence lived a life of self-deception, which is at the core of the construction of utopias; but after hearing a sourceless laugh, he becomes aware of his hypocritical and false life. Letting go of this lie is not an easy task and struggles to convince himself that he is happy, but his self-consciousness, now that his *mauvaise foi* is clear to him, keeps him from blissfully continuing to live his myth of the “successful and charitable lawyer.” Why does pain afford an awakening of the false-self? And how does one cope with such an uncomfortable, yet imperative, aspect of our humanness?

**Dostoevsky: The need to feel**

If human behavior could be understood through reason, then the underground man, in Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, would not be misunderstood in his belief in the human need for free will. Nevertheless, most people will elect what is most beneficial for them instead
of their free will, as the multitude of choices and actions becomes unbearable. When confronted with choice, it is easier to elect for someone else to decide, for, if they chose wrong, the burden falls on the decision-maker. Taking charge of one’s own life and accepting the consequences of the actions is fearless (or at least comfortable with the inevitability of fear and pain).

The underground man’s masochistic inclination often obfuscates the claim expounded in this text. For example, in chapter IV, when the underground man takes pleasure in his humiliation: he says, “‘Ha, ha, ha! You will be finding enjoyment in toothache next,’ you cry, with a laugh. ‘Well, even in toothache there is enjoyment,’ I answer” (Dostoevsky 10). The underground man’s imagined audience, to whom he refers to in his use of “you,” cannot see his argument that pain is a crucial part of living. Their misunderstanding of his plead to them, in part, proves his point; if one does not want to feel pain, their blindness is all-encompassing. In one of the following lines, he explains further, “The enjoyment of the sufferer finds expression in those moans… Those moans express in the first place all the aimlessness of your pain, which is so humiliating to your consciousness” (Dostoevsky 10). Moaning, to the underground man, is the exteriorization of what he believes to be central to life: suffering. This moan is animalistic; it is sonorous and un-ignorable. The mere act of vocalizing the moan is a discarding (or overcoming) of the fear associated with feeling pain. In this way, one gains authority over one’s life because pain is not feared, but a badge of pride.

The underground man is baffled by people’s urge to numb the pulsating ache of life. He tells his reader to find enjoyment in the toothache. What a radical thought! It is easy to get caught up in the underground man’s tendency to derive pleasure from pain, but what he is trying to get across is that if you feel no pain, how do you enjoy life? What do you strive for? What inspires you? In that same section, the underground man sees that he has not made his point and
goes on to address his reader and say, “No, it seems our development and our consciousness must go further to understand all the intricacies of this pleasure… But of course, that is because I do not respect myself” that you, reader, do not see my point (Dostoevsky 11). Respect, for the underground man, does not serve the freedom he needs to secure through his pain. Respect is another façade and falsehood held up by myths that do not serve to grant freedom or autonomy to the person; it simply perpetuates a system afraid of fear, but entirely concerned with saving face. In a way, this work is an affront to ideologies whose aim it is to terminate distress. A clear example is that of Utopias, but Dostoevsky wrote Notes from Underground in 1864, what he was referring to was specifically utilitarianism and Marxism.

The utopian image that Dostoevsky uses to convey the inherent dilemma with a “perfect” community spans two of his main themes: pain and free will. The underground man begins his argumentation with the context of a crystal palace: “You believe in a palace of crystal that can never be destroyed—a place at which one will not be able to put out one’s tongue or make a long nose on the sly. And perhaps that is just why I am afraid of this edifice, that it is of crystal and can never be destroyed” (Dostoevsky 24). As I will show in the section on Nietzsche, for him the fact that the Crystal Palace cannot be destroyed, means that nothing can be created. This stifling of change is why this image of a crystal palace so resonated with utopians, for they necessitate stability to succeed.

With regards to free will, the opposite of stability, the underground man realizes how vital it is to be able to criticize, rebel, act freely, or even “put out [your] tongue” regardless of the implications. And, of course, this is not something that can exist within the walls of the Crystal Palace. To reiterate, the underground man believes that the human need for free will should outweigh the need for the “best” outcome, as measured by pleasure or happiness. He claims that
humans should sometimes choose the ‘wrong’ path just to be heard or feel seen, or be different. The human intent, as seen by Dostoevsky, is to be good; perfection, on the other hand, is sought but only because of the misunderstanding of its implications.

…shower upon [man] with all sorts of earthly blessings, submerge him in happiness over his head so that only little bubbles appear on the surface of this happiness, as if on water, give him such economic prosperity that he’ll have absolutely nothing left to do except sleep, eat gingerbread, and to worry about the continuation of [his species]—even then, out of pure ingratitude, sheer perversity, he’ll commit some repulsive act. H[e would] even risk his gingerbread, and will intentionally desire the most wicked rubbish, the most uneconomical absurdity, simply in order to inject his own pernicious fantastical element into all this positive rationality. (Dostoevsky 21-22)

What the underground man is attempting to highlight is that without the juxtaposition of good and evil in daily life, one cannot value the good without its counterpart. Man would inevitably squander all the happiness, as he claims, “out of pure ingratitude.” This is one of the first lessons humans learn. Perfection is always sought—but as Schopenhauer understands—once the object of desire is attained, pain is momentarily numbed; man, then finds another “thing” to pine for, even in a utopian state of bliss, full of “gingerbread” (West). In a way, the fulfilling of desires only leads to more longing.

A typical example of this unfulfillable longing can be found in Genesis, where Adam and Eve have everything that they could have ever wanted in the perfect garden of Eden. However, there was one rule that they had to follow: do not eat the fruit from the tree. Moreover, Eve could not have understood the concept of wrong or what she could lose by exerting her free will and eating the forbidden fruit. As the underground man says so articulately, “For if a desire should come into conflict with reason we shall then reason and not desire, because it will be impossible retaining our reason to be senseless in our desires, and in that way knowingly act against reason and desire to injure ourselves” (Dostoevsky 19). Eden, while a less structured and populated utopia, serves its purpose in demonstrating that reason is inferior to the visceral need for free will
and that one cannot understand the good without an understanding of what can be lost. Therefore, one must accept pain not to divulge freewill.

The underground man, rightfully, worries that the freedom promised by a utopia (or socialist utopias) could with great ease lead to complete uniformity and totalitarianism (Dostoevsky 18). However, do utopias seek to put an end to desire? If we were to stop feeling desire, “[man] will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ-stop or something of the sort” (Dostoevsky 19). What humans want is at the core of our individuality. Dostoevsky dreads uniformity which he claims can lead to totalitarianism. This allows them to escape from self-confrontation (what Clamence attempts to retreat towards after his realization), that Pascalian existential feeling of horror vacui.

To follow the rationalist argument, if you give man all that which he could ever dream of, the pain undergone due to the shortage will wither away, as creating more is not feasible in such a short period. It is evident that even in solving all the problems (if that were even possible), more would sprout, much like a Hydra, where when beheaded two more heads grow back in its place. Problems, worries, and unpredictability are some of the few dependable characteristics of this human life. The underground man rejects the notion that reason and scientific advancements can lead to the “good life,” which prescribes the “improvement” of humanity (a notion that Nietzsche also brings into conversation):

Now, for example, you want to cure man of his old habits and improve his will according to the demands of science and common sense. But how do you know not only whether it’s possible, but even if it’s necessary to remake him in this way? Why do you conclude that human desire must undoubtedly be improved? In short, how do you know that such improvement will really be to man’s advantage? (Dostoevsky 23)

The “beaten path” of searching for the utopian because it must be better, is a dangerous pursuit. The underground man’s understandable skepticism in the deconstructing of life’s inherent
characteristics of pain and suffering does not necessarily mean that is will yield freedom, fulfillment, and happiness. Dystopian literature proves that even with the best intentions, the balance of the universe is set. It is more important for the underground man that people learn to welcome the anguish of life, to remind them they are free. For the “utopian” deconstruction would inevitably infringe upon our freedom, the only thing that humans have, whether in good or bad faith. The freedom required to uphold the falsehoods in *mauvaise foi* is similar to that of the Crystal Palace as they both necessitate an admiration of (or, possibly, a blindness that hierarchizes) appearances over reality.

As outlined by the underground man, the Crystal Palace is a structure that cannot be toppled or modified once created, the use of a crystal palace as a metaphor for utopian socio-political structures creates a feeling of surveillance—much like Foucault’s idea of the panopticon, designed by Bentham. Not only does the Crystal Palace create an environment of distrust, but due to its immutability, it negates any form of creation or birth. Free will, in its most evident of senses, does not seem to be infringed upon in the structure, but if one’s world or community finds itself to be a crystal palace-like ecosystem, freedom is not a choice one has. Free will, as I will show in the following chapter on *Brave New World*, in a utopian structure exists within the bounds of the overarching stability. The free will exerted or believed to have within these restrictive structures is a smokescreen. In *Brave New World*, the World State injects the population with their preferred “choices.”

In the Crystal Palace, like the World State, criticism is silenced, or at least punished so severely that it deters others, as fear is a powerful censor. Much of the human struggle, and what

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2 A phenomenon where humans, due to social pressure, take up false values and relinquish their freedom to act inauthentically. Most importantly, they are still dependent on their freedom to be able to perform this denial.
is central to the process of being human, is to uncover who we are: what we like/dislike, what makes us cry, laugh, and feel pain. Yet, if the State has infused their will into the people, the ability to find oneself, to individuate, has been completely extinguished. The underground man notes how abject the “beaten path” is due to knowing where it leads. Risk, while to different degrees depending on the person, is an essential part of life. “...[Is] only well-being advantageous to man? Doesn’t reason ever make mistakes about advantage? After all, perhaps man likes something other than well-being. Perhaps he loves suffering just as much? Perhaps suffering is just as advantageous to him as well-being? Man sometimes loves suffering terribly, to the point of passion, and that’s a fact.” (Dostoevsky 24). So, what is the value held in suffering?

The underground man believes that the value does not lie in that suffering allows for the exertion of free will nor that it is an escape from boredom, it is enjoyable because you feel your presence on this earth. “Even if science and reason could construct ‘the utopian palace of crystal,’ which, supposedly, would bring about ‘the days of bliss,’ people would act perversely out of utter boredom, and, ultimately, their ‘most advantageous advantage,’ the ability to freely, impulsively act in the way that they feel like acting rather than the way that reason dictates” (Sherman 95). The underground man believes that, in acting this way, it “leaves us our most important, most treasured possession, our individuality” (Sherman 95). Reason, in that it attempts to protect one from life’s inevitable fears, works against the freedom that the ache of pain proves one still has. To embody this individuality and freedom, he implores one to “put out one’s tongue” at the utopian Crystal Palace (Dostoevsky 24). Without rejecting this utopian vision and choosing to live in per the “modern project,” it would be “tantamount to a living death,” thanks to the nexus of freedom, pain, and life. (Sherman 95).
Nietzsche: The remedy

Dostoevsky’s work began to circulate in Western Europe years after his death. Translations, of a man whose work had remained trapped in Russia, made their way into a bookstore where Friedrich Nietzsche haphazardly came across *L’esprit souterrain* in Nice, France (Stellino 25). Nietzsche describes the discovery in the following excerpt in a letter written on February 23, 1887, “I knew nothing about Dostoevsky, not even his name, until a few weeks ago—uncultivated person that I am, reading no ‘periodicals’! In a bookshop my hand accidentally came to rest on *L’esprit souterrain*, just recently translated to French…” (Stellino 23). The first mention Nietzsche made of Fyodor Dostoevsky was in a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck on February 12, 1887: “Did I write to you of H. Taine? And that he finds me ‘infiniment suggestif’? And of Dostoevsky?” (Stellino 23). The next day, Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast, again asking “[if he knew of] Dostoevsky? With the exception of Stendhal, no one has given me so much pleasure and astonishment…” (Stellino 23). Nietzsche felt he had found a “kindred spirit” in Dostoevsky, as he was able to explore the depths of the “human soul… without hiding them under a veil of moral hypocrisy,” which Nietzsche greatly admired (Stellino 37, 42). Many of Nietzsche’s characters in his writing are literary, so it is to no surprise that he would feel such a connection to Dostoevsky, let alone “a mid-nineteenth-century ex-bureaucrat living in semi-feudal Russia” (Sherman 95).

Nietzsche, in his 1882 work *The Gay Science*, considers the role of pain and its relationship with pleasure. He begins his inquiry with the question: “The aim of science should

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3 *Notes from Underground*

4 While *The Gay Science* was published prior to Nietzsche’s discovery of Dostoevsky, after writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche returned to *The Gay Science*. He refinished the work, adding a fifth chapter after his 1887 discovery of Dostoevsky.
be to give men as much pleasure and as little displeasure as possible?” (Nietzsche 85). As Nietzsche understands it, science is a way of seeking knowledge about the world. According to the common view, the ideal human balance would be an inundation of pleasure with a total absence of pain, normalizing the “good” and thus neutralizing it. So, Nietzsche complicates the pleasure-heavy “ideal” with the following proposition: “...what if pleasure and displeasure were so tied together that whoever wanted to have as much as possible of one must also have as much as possible of the other?” (Nietzsche 85). Linked pain and pleasure are like the Chinese symbol of Yin and Yang, creating an image of an interdependent equilibrium. As Nietzsche points out, this idea of equilibrium is burdensome to the human consciousness, that it can lead to life as prescribed by the “Stoics [who]… desired as little pleasure as possible, in order to get as little displeasure as possible out of life” (Nietzsche 86). The use of the Stoics as a way of navigating the relationship between pain and pleasure as Nietzsche described above, brings the reader to wonder, as to what life is in the absence of these two great driving forces? This is the point of attraction for many utopias. The election to relinquish free will is conceivable only in the face of a promised blissful life—in many ways, a life absent of pain and full of pleasure.

As much as we understand the avoidance of pain, we are wrong in assuming that such an absence will lead to happiness. Nietzsche explains that “The general lack of experience of pain... and the relative rarity of the sight of anyone who is suffering have an important consequence: pain is now hated much more than was the case formerly; one speaks much more of it; indeed, one considers the existence of the mere thought of pain scarcely endurable and turns it into a reproach against the whole of existence” (Nietzsche 113). In other words, Nietzsche is acknowledging that since we strive so much to avoid the experience of pain, consequently humans have begun to fear, thus lowering their tolerance for it. When was this time where we
feared pain less than we do now? Is he implying that we should increase our understanding of pain in so that we lose our fear or aversion to it? If he is, Nietzsche presupposes that the freedom Dostoevsky’s underground man talks about. The implication of a non-linked balance, or even a small increase in both pain and pleasure, could allow for a deeper understanding of the human drive. As Nietzsche explains, there is equal “wisdom [to gain] in pain as there is in pleasure: both belong among the factors that contribute the most to the preservation of the species. If pain did not [have wisdom], it would have perished long ago” (Nietzsche 252). Thus, reasoning in pain is, in part, a rationality that should be counteracted. While Nietzsche also critiques the desire for pleasure, as it is usually understood, what is the origin of our reluctance towards pain and why are humans so drawn to the fantastical idea of a painless life?

Nietzsche’s viewpoint could be seen as utopian in that in pain and pleasure, the society created promises painlessness. What utopianism does not reveal, or at least as readily as its benefits, is that to reap, one must relinquish much of one’s free will. “To this day you have the choice: either as little displeasure as possible, painless in brief— and in the last analysis socialists and politicians of all parties have no right to promise their people more than that—or as much displeasure as possible as the price for the growth of an abundance of subtle pleasures and joys that have rarely been relished yet” (Nietzsche 86). It is in the subtlety of these pleasures and joys that Nietzsche’s idea of pleasure is grounded.

Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche does not value most ordinary pleasure and happiness. He sees pain as a necessary catalyst for health and creativity. Nietzsche describes the “great health” as, “the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being” (Nietzsche 347). This moving beyond health “that one does not merely have but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give up” that Nietzsche deduces is the good that comes from the
cyclical pain of life (Nietzsche 346). “The great health” cannot be acquired without a constant ebbing and returning of pain. As Nietzsche explains, “What is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies that can still turn any desert into lush farmland” (328). Much like the regeneration of plant vegetation after a volcano erupts, it takes years, but beauty reemerges more vividly than before in the wake of painful destruction. To “desire to diminish and lower the level of human pain, you also have to diminish and lower the level of their capacity for joy” (Nietzsche 86). If the two—pain and health—are contingent upon one another, then Nietzsche suggests that we should not live like the Stoics, afraid to feel, but rather should embrace the swells of both the good and the bad, which are intrinsic to human existence (Nietzsche 257). “Every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life; they always presuppose suffering and sufferers” (Nietzsche 328). Following Nietzsche’s logic, art and philosophy, in their creation, are seen as a “remedy” to the struggles of life; without such struggles and discomforts, the creative beauty and intellectual enrichment would not exist.

The notion that creativity comes from the rebirth ensuing after suffering (inherently impossible is the Crystal Palace due to its indestructability) would suppose that utopias, where painlessness is promised, are devoid of creativity and hamper the explorative urge and critical eyes. In many ways, utopias seek to exclude art as a form of self-expression, for creation is a negation of convention; to create is to go beyond even the social conventions, the homogeneity on which utopias are founded. Nietzsche asks himself “in every instance, ‘is it hunger or superior abundance that here become creative?’” (329). The horror of painlessness and perfection held in utopias, presupposing that delusion and error are not essential to human existence, would be far more painful were it simply honest (Nietzsche 163). Yet, Nietzsche claims that “Honesty would
lead to nausea and suicide. But there is a counterforce against our honesty that helps us to avoid such consequences: art as the good will to appearance” (163). Much of how people understand themselves in the world, is through this “good will to appearance.” The construction of a persona is fundamentally similar, especially in its faults to that of a utopia. It is not until this horridly false and inauthentic creation is put into practice that one realizes that it completely strips one of their freedom. The underground man, advocates for free will the only way he knows how: by feeling pain. In creating this illusion, a far more dangerous pursuit than that of feeling pain, the person falls into a self-deceptive trap.

**Camus: Duality in bad faith**

In Albert Camus’s 1956 *La chute* (*The Fall*), Jean-Baptiste Clamence⁵ “was a [defense] lawyer in Paris and, indeed, a rather well-known [one]” who abruptly concluded that his life was hypocritical (Camus 17). He lived in a way that his actions would fulfill the image of the magnanimous man he believed he needed to be, due to his profession; but his actions while outwardly exactly as he constructed them to be, the motives behind his generosity were entirely self-serving. This falseness negates all the good he did, positioning him in mauvaise foi. Consequently, Clamence flees from Paris and his former life and settles in Amsterdam. He is living in the former Jewish quarter of the city “until our Hitlerian brethren spaced it out a bit… I am living on the site of one of the greatest crimes in history” (Camus 11). The guilt-stricken narrator finds himself living out Dostoevsky's underground man’s same fears.

Perfection is not in the bounds of human possibility. Jean-Baptiste Clamence asks the reader, namely to whom he has given a role in his narrative, the following question, “Do you

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⁵ His name Clamence, brings to mind the term “clemency,” or, the French, “clémence.” Fittingly, the legal definition of clemency is the ability to moderate the harshness of the sentence.
want a good clean life? Like everyone else?” (Camus 7-8). Much like the underground man, he is questioning the “beaten path” and whether it will yield freedom, fulfillment, and happiness. Clamence does not let the reader answer his question, yet the pertinence of this introspection as proposed by someone running from their previous life is rather ironic. Clamence’s life in Paris was the “good clean life,” or, rather appeared so from the outside. When describing his relationship to his work, as a noble defense lawyer, he claimed that “...justice slept with [him] every night” (Camus 17). However, as the main character unpacks what drove him, he says, “...I was on the right side; that was enough to satisfy my conscience” (Camus 18). How can self-importance have motivated the man whose job it was to seek justice? Does the drive to be right surpass the moral bounds of truth?

The image of perfection that Clamence had painted for the public in his previous life was riddled with falsehoods. For example, when Clamence is listing his good deeds, he subconsciously reveals the image he tried to create by “giving up [his] seat in the bus..., picking up an object for an old lady, … or merely [forfeiting his] taxi to someone who was in a greater hurry” (Camus 21). All of this he did for the spectacle and how it made him feel to be seen as generous and kind; but in doing so for the recognition, it negated any good he accomplished. At one point, Clamence even admits that “these are just little touches but they will help [one] grasp the constant delights I experienced in my life... [that] I derived constant pleasure from... [to such ends that] I took such pleasure in giving that I hated being obligated to do so” (Camus 22). Charity and kindness cannot be considered such if they are done in search of inner pleasure or recognition. Clamence’s “utopian life,” or “good clean life,” was only such from the outside, as intentions are just as much a part of reality as the effects of the actions (Camus 17).
The type of perfection that Clamence embodies is one much like that of the Crystal Palace as proposed in *Notes from Underground*, in that the proposed perfection is comprised of a much darker reality. The “Underground Man is [very likely] the model for Clamence, and, indeed, these two figures bear numerous striking similarities” (Sherman 95). The underground man lives in the margins as does Clamence, and they revel in “self-debasement that sees its own self-reflection as a sickness from which it cannot flee, and, like Clamence, the Underground Man sees this sickness as a peculiar form of transcendence” (Sherman 95). The pain the two characters chose to feel aids them in their journey towards authenticity; yet, this is a journey he never reaches the end of.

Clamence, to explain his duplicitous past life turns to the people whom he encountered in his work, explaining that “…if you deprive men of [justice/being right], you transform them into dogs frothing with rage. How many crimes committed merely because their authors could not endure being wrong!” (Camus 18,19). This claim, that from injustice or being wronged one can be brought to commit crimes, is a somewhat troubling one. In many ways, Clamence, to deserve the life of the devoted and respected defense lawyer felt he had to be altruistic, but does so to prove and maintain this image of himself, he became false in his actions and thus dual in his being. The self-deception performed, in denying his own freedom, only further proved his unworthiness of, not only his prestigious and righteous job but of the persona he created to better perform this paradoxically free decision to refuse oneself the freedom to live authentically; this goal of living authentically cannot be achieved in fear of pain. To do so, one must fully be aware of the social forces attempting to influence them and actively push back.

On a warm fall night along the Seine, Jean-Baptiste Clamence tells the reader, he was walking home in a rather good mood, thanks to the “good deed” he had done earlier in the day.
Looking over at the river from a bridge, (a city structure he, earlier in the book, tells us he has sworn a vow never to cross one again, making his choice of Amsterdam a rather odd one due to the number of bridges) his ego is rising from the great day he had had; Clamence hears laughter behind him. When he turns around, no one is there, so he looks over the edge of the bridge, but there are no boats in the water. He continues to hear the (non-sinister) laugh, which unnerves him due to is sourcelessness. He runs home. After phoning a friend who does not answer, he hears more laughter, but as he looks outside his window, he sees that it is but a group of kids saying goodnight. To calm himself, Clamence gets some water, and as he looks at himself in the mirror, he finds himself smiling, “it seemed to me my smile was double…” (Camus 31). This laughter which is so close to judgment, especially for someone who believes they seek justice every day, is what brings Clamence to realize that he is, in fact, living a double life. In a more absurd analysis of the text, the laugh, due to its kind-hearted nature, describes the judgment that he is both stuck in and that petrifies him. In realizing his performance, Clamence is faced with the choice of either convincing himself that he is happy and ignoring his self-deception or he must enact his freedom and chose to be uncomfortable in his pain.

The duality of the main character is much like that of utopias: the attractive exterior that eventually falls away once in practice. The two, Clamence and utopias are built on self-deception, that once realized is impossible to sustain. Later I will argue that it is precisely the self-deception that largely allows for utopias project to be, at least in part, successful.

“Clamence’s …‘answer’ to the seemingly intractable problem of nihilism sits halfway between the answers offered by Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky” (Sherman 97). The perfect outer shell is not able to withstand the imperfect nature of life, complicating the very possibility of a utopia; the key, however, is the self-deception that Clamence was blind to before he fled to Amsterdam.
Clamence’s mauvaise foi is the product of his false belief that he can be happy
“irrespective of his relation to other people, and, indeed… he proclaims his happiness under
circumstances that speak for themselves in terms of the self-deceptive nature of this belief”
(Sherman 104). “Then, soaring over this whole continent which is under my sway without
knowing it, drinking in the absinthe-colored light of breaking day, intoxicated with evil words, I
am happy—I am happy, I tell you, I won’t let you think I’m not happy, I am happy unto death”
(Camus 144). Clamence’s verbalization of his happiness is, in part, an attempt to convince
himself of the false values he has adopted, actively denying his freedom. This self-recrimination,
and irony, is not lost on the reader; part of Clamence is desperate to recover his blissful life,
ignorant to his self-deception. This bad faith is the result of social forces that imbue freedom and
turn it against oneself; but bad faith, due to its dependence on freedom (which distinguishes it
from how utopias depend on self-deception) implies a certain self-awareness. Performing the
denial becomes much easier than feeling the underground man’s pain, or finding art with which
to remedy the anguish, as proposed by Nietzsche.
Chapter 2: *Brave New World*

As seen with Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Camus, pain is a fundamental aspect of human existence; so, what would happen if pain were exterminated? Since such an experiment would be iniquitous—due to the inherent eugenicist practices that would guide the work and social engineering which would be inherent to the process—Aldous Huxley explores this hypothetical through the genre of dystopian literature. Still, eugenics and social engineering very much accompany this work. The World State, in the text, ensures the painless and stable circumstances of the proletariat through eugenicist social stratification, conditioning by way of sleep-teaching, and, finally, *soma*—the drug that numbs all of life’s discomforts. The world is balanced; so, when an aspect like pain is eliminated, another opposing element must compensate for the loss. In *Brave New World*, the constituent that pays for the painlessness is the whole concept of creation; more specifically art is eradicated. Is this a price that one can pay to solve the time-old aversion to pain while not compromising the peculiarities that make life worth living?

*Brave New World*, written in 1931, paints a utopian social structure in which “stability [is] practically assured” (Huxley 54). The society is comprised of a caste system into which each person is assigned prior to birth or what is referred to as “decanting,” as the natural conception of children is banned, and zygotes are grown in labs. Each embryo, depending on its caste, is cared for differently, as the director of the “Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre” explained to a group of students: “Epsilon embryo[s] must have an Epsilon environment as well as an Epsilon heredity” (Huxley 1, 14). Therefore, from “decanting” one has a position to fulfill:
Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, or Epsilon. Within each group, an individual is either a plus or a minus, which further hierarchizes the people.

The world that Aldous Huxley created is run by the World State whose motto is “COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY”\(^7\) (1). The stark and forthright vision for this world allows for a clear understanding of the framework of the society. The way that the community ensures stability is, in part, through the Fordian quasi-religion where people worship Henry Ford, to whom the invention of the assembly line is ascribed. The format of the assembly line is the basis for the general organization of the society: embryos are harvested and cared for by those who work in the hatchery, and everyone is placed into castes which determine their level of care even as embryos. For example, for a lower caste fetus, the hatchery workers are instructed to “[keep the]... embryo below par” by depriving it of oxygen, affecting its brain and skeletal development (Huxley 14). Caste systems, while a physical denotation, also provide jobs and a sense of belonging to a community, which aid the individual in creating an identity bound to their given social position, denying them even of their choice to relinquish their freedom. As Dostoevsky’s underground man points out, humans will choose what is most beneficial to them in exchange for their free will. The underground man urges people to feel pain, even though it is unpleasant, for it supplies them with their freedom. On the other hand, the eugenicist process of social engineering—inherent to implementing a utopia, as outlined by Karl Popper—provides people with a box in which to find “individuality,” granting just enough bend in the framework for it not to break.

\(^6\) Appearing in descending order
\(^7\) This is reminiscent of the infamous French national motto: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.
To ensure stability, this “new world” prepares new generations through “the principle of sleep-teaching, or hypnopædia,” where phrases are repeated while the person sleeps so that information is indiscriminately absorbed (Huxley 25). An example of what can be sleep-taught is that “‘Alpha children wear grey... Gammas are stupid. They all wear green, and Delta children wear khaki...’ Repeated forty or fifty times more before they wake” (Huxley 27-28). However, more serious implications can come from such a formidable tool. One example of this, as told by the director to that same tour, is that: “Not so very long ago..., Gammas, Deltas, even Epsilons, had been conditioned to like flowers... The idea was to makes them want to be going out into the country... [to] compel them to consume transport... [however] a love of nature keeps no factories busy. It was decided to abolish the love of nature, at any rate among the lower classes” (Huxley 22). The conditioning practiced in this utopian society impacts all aspects of life: dislikes, inclinations, surroundings, and even the economy. The power held by those in positions of authority in this “perfect” world, through eugenicist practices, were able to construct a taxonomy which bent itself to the ultimate goal: stability; well, stability for the elite.

No efforts are spared in ensuring the complacency of the proletariat of the World State. To guarantee its success, free will, while not eradicated, is hampered through systematic sleep-teaching. This technique fills the populace “‘until the child’s mind is these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions is the child’s mind...The adult’s mind too...these suggestions are our suggestions” (Huxley 28-29). The population believes the choices they exercise are their own, but they have been steamrolled with rhetoric to believe they want the stability needed for the prosperity of the World State. This engineering of the mind gives those in charge the ability to control the masses, but since they are not also socially engineered, their humanness is a precarious component of such a social structure.
Karl Popper, in *Open Society and its Enemies*, explores the idea of utopian social engineering, where the intent set forth by utopias is to construct an ideal state where all social values, such as freedom, equality, and true happiness are somehow fulfilled. To achieve this ideal, governments, the media or other groups try to influence opinions and social behaviors on a general level in order to yield a projected outcome. Popper warns that this is—while superficially attractive—ultimately fatally flawed. The vastness of our world and its complexity are set up so that such large-scale changes would inevitably bring about undesirable consequences, due to the inherently obfuscated and limited perspective of humans. This yearning to mold a group of people into an ideal society is problematic due to the fact that utopians believe that institutions can effectively control the masses. However, humans run these institutions and hence are innately unpredictable and make mistakes. This “human factor” is what has led to some of the more blatant and detrimental consequences of this form of social engineering. Dystopias often serve to bring light to exactly this point, as theories on social engineering do not have the same effect on the reader as a vivid catatonic society.

The State, in *Brave New World*, combats the “human factor” by giving the illusion of free will, through the use of conditioning. Utilizing hypnopædia, the State injects regulations, flattens individuality, and gifts themselves with stability. Simply, the masses are conditioned to believe the choices they make are their own, when, in fact, they are strategically ensnared in the State’s will. The only person on whom this conditioning does not seem to have entirely worked is on the character Bernard Marx.⁸ This is best shown in the scene where Bernard goes on a date with Lenina Crowne,⁹ a “healthy and virtuous English girl” as described by Bernard, who—while he

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⁸ His name is redolent of that of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the German socialist revolutionary.
⁹ Her name evokes the Soviet leader, Vladimir Lenin (in office from 1922-1924).
does not fit in—still uses the vocabulary and qualities valued and instilled by the State to describe her.

On the way back from their date, Bernard wants to show Lenina the breathtaking view of the ocean and share the emotions that rush through him. He turns to Lenina and says, “It makes me feel… as though I were more me, if you see what I mean. More on my own, not so completely part of something else. Not just a cell in the social body. Doesn’t it make you feel like that, Lenina” (Huxley 90)? Bernard is left with a rather Hegelian form of describing what he is feeling, through that which he is not. Lenina replies, “It’s horrible, it’s horrible… And how can you talk like that about not wanting to be a part of the social body? After all, every one works for every one else” (Huxley 91). Lenina is even more restrained in her language than Bernard. She finds herself relying on her hypnopædic “knowledge:” “Every one works for every one else. We can’t do without any one…” (Huxley 74). When Lenina says “we can’t do without any one,” she evokes Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, wherein there is a mutual dependence upon the other. Yet, coming from Lenina’s point of view as a member of the “elite” in the World State, and considering the emphasis on the Fordian assembly line, it seems more so that the subdued elite need the lower castes more than they need her. Without words of resistance, discontent, and conflict in their disposal, the characters are left complacent.

The consequences of language as a tool for self-expression, self-knowledge, and, most importantly, resistance is best exemplified in, the character, John in comparison to the rest of the World State. He learned to read with his mother Linda’s old decanting manuals from when she worked at a hatchery. Thanks to the fact that he didn’t grow up in the World State, he was able to read works by Shakespeare; “but [the words’] magic was strong and went on rumbling in his
head, and somehow it was as though he has never really hated Pope before; never really hated him because he had never been able to say how much he hated him” (Huxley 132). Because of his non-standardized language, he could not fulfill the World State’s hopes of “COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY” (Huxley 1).

The “civilized” world that Huxley created was used as a means to analyze elements of the human condition and subvert their meaning. In doing so, a general disdain by the “civilized” would befall those not in their perfect painless world, as they had been conditioned to see basic human reflexes as objectionable.

Their world didn’t allow them to take things easily, didn’t allow them to be sane, virtuous, happy. What with mothers and lovers, what with the prohibitions they were not conditioned to obey, what with the temptations and the lonely remorses, what with all the diseases and the endless isolating pain, what with the uncertainties and the poverty—they were forced to feel strongly. And feeling strongly (and strongly, what was more, in solitude, in hopelessly individual isolation), how could they be stable? (Huxley 41)

While Schopenhauer would agree that our world (not Huxley’s fictional one) does not allow for people to be happy, his claim is not tied to our inability to “take things easy,” our “mothers and lovers,” nor our inability to obey (West). For Schopenhauer, the opposite of suffering is satisfaction (West). Does *Brave New World* truly grant happiness, a concept that Schopenhauer doesn’t believe is possible, at least not through satisfying desires? What *Brave New World* does put its finger on are the many qualities of life that lead non-conditioned humans to “feel strongly,” which one does not see as a defective or repellant characteristic, but a way to express and share an experience. The subversion of natural human tendencies, then, marks the awareness of the self located in times of pain and the sharing of such experiences as reprehensible. However, this is just the starting block of how painlessness is created and ensured.

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10 Linda’s main lover in Malpais, after having been shamed for having had sex with all the townswomen’s husbands
Sacrifices must be made to achieve the objective of stability in a world that is inherently impermanent. Nietzsche as he confronts the Stoics in *The Gay Science*, explains that they lived in a way that they encountered as little pleasure in life to avoid as much displeasure as possible; as they believed that the two elements of life were inherently balanced (Nietzsche 86). Nevertheless, the burden of narrowing the margin between pleasure and pain leaves one, while, yes, stable, but concurrently without the most delightful pleasures life can offer, and for many, what makes life worth living. As Nietzsche points out, this idea of equilibrium, or, as referred to in *Brave New World*, stability, is hollow. To mitigate such a dull and burdensome existence, Huxley’s new world created a substance called *soma*,11 “the perfect drug… [a] euphoric, narcotic, [which is] pleasantly halluc[enogenic]. All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects” (Huxley 53–54). *Soma*, as used in stable *Brave New World*, numbs physical and emotional pain or discomfort; “and if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there’s always *soma* to give you a holiday from the facts… to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, [and] to make you patient” (Huxley 237-8). This miracle drug seems to circumvent the equilibrium proposed by the Stoics for stability. If the “pain quotient” of the equation is erased or filled with a resounding zero, then the time-old problem of the pain-pleasure balance is “solved,” or rather eluded.

What is the implication of evading the pain counterbalance to life’s pleasures? The later part of the novel follows the integration of a boy who grew up separate from the advancements of the “new world.” John’s mother was from the “civilized” world, but because of a terrible accident, she was left behind after a trip and was, to her surprise, pregnant. John grew up in “the

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11 From the Greek *sōma* ‘body.’
pueblo of Malpais,“¹² a land that followed the “old traditions” of the family unit, monogamy, and a knowledge of history. When John and, his mother, Linda were discovered by Lenina and Bernard,¹³ an at the behest of Bernard’s boss, they were brought back to the civilized world, for no one had ever been raised in the World State, given birth, and left to decay without the “civilized” science. Upon their arrival, “...nobody had the smallest desire to see Linda. [To be] a mother—that was past a joke: it was an obscenity” (Huxley 153). However, John was a spectacle referred to as “the savage.” He suffered in assimilating to a culture that countered natural human functions.

Upon Linda and John’s arrival to the World State, Linda was brought to the hospital because of the many years she had spent out in the “bad country” “‘[The World State] preserve[s people] from diseases. [It] keep[s] their internal secretions artificially balanced at a youthful equilibrium. [For example, they] don’t permit their magnesium-calcium ratio to fall below what it was at thirty. [And they] give them transfusions of young blood” (Huxley 110-111). All this is done to avoid physical deterioration, which would not follow the State’s mission of stability. In the hospital, Linda was administered soma, and John asked, “‘But aren’t you shortening her life by giving her so much?’ ‘In one sense, yes,’ Dr. Shaw admitted. ‘But in another we’re actually lengthening it… Soma may make you lose a few years in time… But think of the enormous, immeasurable durations it can give you out of time. Every soma-holiday is a bit of what our ancestors used to call eternity’” (Huxley 154). The doctor, using a State sanctioned reference to the past, completely subverts of the meaning of eternity. John, obviously upset and confused, struggled with the State’s system of dealing with pain and change, reminiscent of the Crystal

¹² The name of the “uncivilized” “pueblo” means “bad country.” This inherently pays a trick on the reader’s mind to subconsciously associate the World State and the antithetical to the “bad country” that is Malpais.
¹³ The main two characters who are of the social elite. Thanks to Bernard’s job, he is granted the ability to travel to Malpais and invites Lenina to go with him.
Palace. Shortly after their arrival, Linda died; John is left alone in a foreign land and brokenhearted. No one understands him. People urged him to take soma, to get through these unpleasant feelings. But ultimately, John realizes that this is not a place in which he can live.

The values that guide the population of *Brave New World* isolate the people from history, literature, science, and art; it is the price they pay, or, rather, the price those in charge decided to pay in exchange for the freedoms of the people. Without a frame of reference for what to criticize and use to envision what could be better, they are the perfect utopian citizens. This limiting infrastructure ensures that:

> The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; they’re not afraid of death; they’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they’re plagued with no mothers or fathers; they’ve got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they’re so conditioned that they practically can’t help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there’s soma. (Huxley 220)

Stability, which is venerated by the State’s authority, is the method through which happiness is attained. Stability is the “simple” reason for limiting the human experience, but stability also shows a fear of sensibility and change. Eliminating the unwavering love of a mother, and the agonizing pain of her inevitable death leaves stability in a perfectly stoic position: safe from suffering and paying for it with pleasure.

Social practices dictate how humans interact, self-surveil, and understand situations. In *Brave New World*, in order to reestablish and reformulate essential human functions, an eradication of the “old world’s” history took place. With a general lack of subtlety, disbanding any concerns or hesitance, the State called it “...a campaign against the Past;¹⁴ by the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments...by the suppression of all books published

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¹⁴ Reminiscent of the Four Olds: Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas; A (1966 - 1976) Chinese campaign by the state to eradicate the pre-communist customs (Spence 575).
before A.F.¹⁵ 150,” it is as if nothing existed before (Huxley 51). With no point of cultural or historical reference, the people depend entirely on state powers to dictate their lives. Without having experienced art, literature, and historical artifacts, the citizens of the World State are left to blindly believe that “...historical facts are unpleasant” (Huxley 24). Certain historical relics, while destroyed, were recreated. For example, at one point a character turns to another to make small talk and says, “‘I hear the new Alhambra¹⁶ is first-rate’” (Huxley 35). Yet nothing in their exchange brings them to question, why the old Alhambra was destroyed and a new one built in its place, or even what the implications are of doing so. All they know is the “‘beautiful and inspired saying of Our Ford’s: History is bunk’” (Huxley 34). The verb “to be” equates history (the stories of those who came before) as “bunk,” a crude way of dismissing the lessons of one’s forefathers. However, this brilliantly serves the goal of quashing all that does not fit into the social framework; for “bunk” does not incite curiosity or the respect history deserves.

When John had a moment alone with Mustapha Mond¹⁷—the most intelligent and powerful man in the World State—he asked him why the “civilized world” does not have the beautiful literature he had back in Malpais.¹⁸ Mustapha Mond replied, “‘We haven’t any use for old things here.’ ‘Even when they’re beautiful?’ ‘Particularly when they’re beautiful. Beauty’s attractive, and we don’t want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like new ones’” (Huxley 219). The State’s preference for the “new” keeps them in power and dissolves nostalgia. If the new is preferred to the old, then the fond memory of when things were better is

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¹⁵ A satire of B.C. (Before Christ). A.F. stands for After (Henry) Ford, the God-like figure in *Brave New World.*
¹⁶ Similarly, the Kazan Cathedral in Moscow, Russia was demolished at Joseph Stalin’s behest in 1936. In its place the international Communist offices were built. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the church was entirely rebuilt.
¹⁷ His name is suggestive of the British Industrialist politician Alfred Mond (1868-1930).
¹⁸ While Malpais had what we would consider to be old classics of literature, the lack of literacy prevented its people from enjoying the works. John’s ability to read, when he lived in Malpais, gave him the strength to withstand the constant bullying he faced by the village kids.
an impossibility, and the old is effortlessly discarded for the new, as it is full of hope and empty in meaning. John, whose life was changed by reading, specifically Shakespeare, insists: “‘Why don’t you let them see Othello...?’ ‘I’ve told you; it’s old. Besides, they couldn’t understand it... [even if we showed them something] really like Othello nobody could understand it, however new it might be.’ ‘...Why not?’... ‘Because our world is not the same as Othello’s world... you can’t make tragedies without social instability’” (Huxley 220). The World State depends on newness to suppress unrest; they have done so to such an extent that the people they govern “could[n’t] understand it, however new it might be... [as this] world is not the same as Othello’s” (Huxley 220). What is curious about this exchange is that we see that Mustapha Mond, while part of the World State, is not conditioned. He makes the rules; he reads Shakespeare and the Bible; he censors new ideas and controls the totalitarian state.

Mustapha Mond even cheekily tells John, “‘God in the safe and Ford on the shelves’” (Huxley 231). This paradoxical duality is reminiscent of Camus’ Clamence. Jean-Baptiste Clamence, in La chute, one day realizes the double life he is living. He only gains satisfaction in the false values he upholds in his everyday actions; thus, Clamence fashions an inauthentic self, stripping himself of life’s freedoms by choice. Mustapha Mond wants to both enjoy art, science, literature, and religion, but also, as the leader of the World State, he must present a stable and rule-following persona to the public. His dual and inauthentic identity, while it is necessary for him to control and shield the proletariat, keeps him from being able to savor the stability he makes possible for the masses. It is evident that the way the State has suppressed emotion, art, and science in exchange for stability, has left its population empty and their leader in bad faith.

Through his conversation with Mustapha Mond and his interactions with the people of the World State, John learns that “‘Happiness is a hard master... [and] a much harder master, if
one isn’t conditioned to accept it unquestioningly, than truth” (Huxley 227). Nietzsche believes that “Honesty would lead to nausea and suicide. But there is a counterforce against our honesty that helps us to avoid such consequences: art as the good will to appearance” (163). “Art as the good will to appearance” purports the importance of the symbolic over the “real.” In the following chapter, I will comment on the mythification of the suffering artist. However, in Brave New World, honesty and truth exist in the outer limits of the city, meaning that they are concepts that have been loosely interpreted. Through sleep-teaching, the State has created a truth; they too give preference to the symbolic over the “real.” Without the language or experience to confront and question these “truths,” then one is stuck in Plato’s cave, unable to leave, and, more importantly, unable to see. The State constructed these “alternate truths” to help with Nietzsche’s understanding of the nauseating nature of honesty. For Nietzsche, art is the counterforce that helps soften the blows of such honesty. The World State, having had to pay for their stability with art, is left to find another way to alleviate the pain of life. This is achieved through soma, whose effects make everyone’s “Eyes [shine], cheeks... flushed, the inner light of universal benevolence [break] out on every face in happy, friendly smiles” (Huxley 81). However, does soma truly eliminate pain?

John’s influence on the people in the World State is beginning to show. The introduction of difference into a homogenous society, while lacking the language to express what they are feeling, begins to alter the conditioned minds of its citizens. Dissent is contagious. Helmholtz Watson\textsuperscript{19} turns to Bernard and notes his inability to describe his emotions, for it is one out of the

\textsuperscript{19} A well-liked and respected character who has just discovered Shakespeare and poetry. Though he mocks the roles of mothers, fathers, and families, he sees the beauty of the literary works. This prompts his rather critical views of the World State, which helps him create a bond with John (the Savage). Helmholtz Watson’s name is evocative of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century German physician and physicist Herman von Helmholtz and Dr. John Watson, the narrator of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1892.
State constructed lexicon. “‘I feel… as though I were just beginning to have something to write about. As though I were just beginning to be able to use that power I feel I’ve got inside me—that extra, latent power. Something seems to be coming from me’” (Huxley 182). The inability to express one’s creative desires leads to a dramatization of the “power” of creativity. Nevertheless, Helmholtz sees the importance of the deep-rooted source of the feeling that one “ha[s] something to write about.” His inclination to create, while at that moment is rather aimless, it is a massive step towards true free will.

Creation, even in the simplest of tasks, can lead to individuality through its limitless nature; this can then lead to innovation and dissent, due to its provocative roots. The sleep-taught phrase, “‘The more stitches, the less riches; the more stitches,’” serves not only to promote the consumption of goods but to avoid the spiraling effects of the simple act of mending (Huxley 49). What is curious is that later in the text, Mustapha Mond explains to John that “‘that’s the price we have to pay for stability. You’ve got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We’ve sacrificed the high art’” (Huxley 220). If creation can lead to a challenging of the authority, then art is not merely the price paid for this beloved stability, it is the antidote to the numbness necessary for stability.

Upon realizing the dependence and dominating effects of the State’s beloved drug soma, John takes to the streets to “liberate” the “civilized” people. The potency of John’s words is not well-received by the inhabitants of the World State, as they are being lectured to by a person who has a mother. The State had also taken precautions against provocative words such as “freedom” and “democracy.” Instead of not teaching such words, “Liberty [was explained as an] inefficient and miserable [system]. Freedom [was like putting] a round peg in a square hole” (Huxley 46). Therefore, when John began to tell the heavily conditioned people of the World State “‘[to not]
take that horrible stuff,’’” it did not rally the masses as he had hoped (Huxley 211). He kept yelling, “‘It’s poison, it’s poison… Poison to soul as well as body… throw it all away… I come to bring you freedom… Do you like being slaves?... Don’t you want to be free and men? Don’t you even understand what manhood and freedom are’’” (Huxley 211-213)? And in fact, they did not understand what freedom was, or at least not the freedom John was discussing. The people of the World State were never given the option whether they wanted to relinquish their free will, as Dostoevsky’s underground man supposes. For the people of *Brave New World* who had spent their whole lives deeply conditioned and controlled, the mere thought of freedom—were they to have understood the vital term, which John threw across the room—would have had similar effects as the honesty Nietzsche raises. The following “nausea and suicide,” seeing as their world is artless, could only be soothed with the *perfect* drug *soma*. Nevertheless, the administering of the highly contentious drug—even if to soothe the transition to freedom—would be a regression. The pain associated with the freedom granted must be felt, for without the people’s full awareness this has a cyclical effect.

The story closes with John’s suicide, the probable first of such an occurrence in the utopian society. The painlessness promised by the authorities came at a price, too high a price for John. One head official admitted to John, before his death, that stability comes at the cost of art “‘[And] it isn’t only art that’s incompatible with happiness; it’s also science. Science is dangerous; we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled’” (Huxley 225). *Brave New World* possibly creates the perfect utopian infrastructure, exploring the implications of controlled painlessness. Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, and Camus considered pain as the authentic and formative element of life. Suffering provides perspective, whereas its avoidance impedes creativity in any form. Art is “a remedy and an aid in the service of …[the] struggling life” (Nietzsche 328).
There is, for Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, an obvious link between art and suffering. Nietzsche goes even further by pushing art as the panacea for suffering, cementing the pain-creativity bond. So, what occurs when the pain constituent, in the inherently human bond, is numbed?

**On the Author**

Aldous Huxley (1894 - 1963) grew up surrounded by the academic and social elite of England. His life, apart from financially, was not painless. His mother died when Huxley was young and later “what happened to his eyes changed the way he saw the world… He was left at the age of sixteen with only one eye functioning, and that only partly… from an inflammation of the cornea” (James). Huxley was left to work harder than all the other pupils, and that he did, excelling academically. His poor health limited his career options; this made Huxley a voracious reader of literature, science, news, and truly, all that he could get his hands on. Eventually, this led him to write.

His work soon reached the banks of America and “fame in America, as usual, meant fame everywhere. While he was alive, Aldous Huxley was one of the most famous people in the world” (James). However, after his death, at the age of 69, his fame somewhat died with him. “...His enormous reputation rapidly shrank, until, finally, he was known mainly for having written a single dystopian novel about compulsory promiscuity and babies in bottles” published in 1932 (James). While not the only work Huxley wrote, *Brave New World* certainly is one of the most enrapturing and thought-provoking pieces.

Huxley’s famous anti-utopia, written as the Great Slump \(^{20}\) unfolded, promulgates that the only way to reverse the social deterioration is through social engineering. Huxley was not afraid

\(^{20}\) The name for the Great Depression in England.
to voice his radical views. “He... published essays dating from the late 1920s and early 1930s, with titles such as ‘What Is Happening to Our Population?’ and ‘Are we Growing Stupider?’” (Woiak 163). In a letter, Huxley shockingly explained that he believed that “about 99.5% of the entire population of the planet are as stupid and philistine... as the great masses of the English. The important thing, it seems to me, is not to attack the 99.5%... but to try to see that the 0.5% survives, keeps its quality up to the highest possible level, and, if possible, dominates the rest” (Woiak 163). To an extent, Huxley’s eugenicist dogma stems from the foundational desires upon which utopias are created: wanting an improved society. *Brave New World* illustrates Huxley’s unsettling eugenicist views, which are far too often dismissed as a satirical element but clearly are not considering his past writings and his personal experience. His, now, morally objectionable beliefs clearly guide the text.

Due to Huxley’s upbringing, in part thanks to his famous relatives, the English Poet Matthew Arnold and his grandfather T.H. Huxley, a biologist and anthropologist, “it is easy to see how he [came to] the insidious idea that the cultivated élite should cherish its separation from the mass of humanity. Though later on he softened [his] proclivity, he never quite lost his readiness to blame the *mobile vulgus* for multiplying at an indecent rate” (James). This particular position seems to be the ideological epicenter of the “new world” he created. Eugenics, originating from the Greek ἑυγενής or eugenés, comes from the two words, ‘good’ and ‘origin,’ ultimately meaning ‘good-birth’ (Rivard). Huxley wrote extensively on his eugenicist views, which were, prior to World War II, part of a leftist movement sweeping across the West. This theory gained momentum from movements like that of Feminism in the late 19th century through the early 20th century.
This particular leftist branch of eugenics focused on social class rather than race, as its primary target, particularly the lower classes. One shocking example of the effects of this movement can be seen in 1927. That year, in the case of Buck v. Bell, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a previous Virginia State ruling mandating the mandatory sterilization of those deemed “feebleminded” (“The Supreme”). This led to the forced sterilization of approximately 70,000 Americans (“The Supreme”). The institutionalization of eugenics was at an all-time high, leading up to World War II, where it took a particularly grim nosedive, as Fascism co-opted it. After World War II, following the Nuremberg trials and the establishment of human rights, some Western countries continued to participate in forced sterilizations, namely that of Sweden. (Balz)

Huxley’s lack of personal criticism, as a member of the 0.5% he hoped would “dominate the rest,” is not lost on readers. “How can we stop the development from destroying the human race? The questions that racked his brain are still with us” (James). If the origin and reason behind Huxley’s eugenics ideology lie in his personal views, what brought about the aspect of “compulsory promiscuity” in the text (James)? “[A] crucial event [in his life came] in the bewitching form of his future wife, Maria…[she] became the key to his existence. She typed his manuscripts, set up the houses, …and, …vetted his mistresses, generously employing her own charms to help him pull in the best-qualified candidates” (James). The twisted power of the elite controlling and consuming bodily pleasure seems, as Clive James points out, to have come from Huxley’s personal experience. “Considering that Huxley spent so much time in later years talking about the necessity to civilize the sexual impulse, it is instructive to find out that he himself civilized it by indulging it to the hilt” (James). Therefore, “in Brave New World, …[where] the Alpha males of the ruling élite get their fill... [it turns out,] Huxley wasn’t just
dreaming” (James). He not only believed but acted upon the notion that the elite deserved sexual superfluity.

Sexual promiscuity, a eugenicist caste system, and sleep-teaching are the pillars of Huxley’s most famous novel. Even though he believed in much of how he constructed this fictional world, a crucial part of any dystopian text is that it must warn the reader about an aspect of the world that could go terribly wrong, if no large-scale social changes are implemented. In part, Huxley—a prominent eugenicist—must have feared that his credo of a science that could improve the human race through controlled breeding could be misused. I find it difficult to believe that he would condone creating a “semi-moron” sub-species solely to serve the 0.5% elite which he wished to preserve. Depriving oxygen to fetuses to physically and psychologically deform them is beyond immoral. I do not imagine Huxley’s suffering due to his near blindness would allow him to promote deforming babies before their birth. As the story ends with John’s suicide, the dystopian necessity for the depiction of great suffering or injustice is fulfilled. A utopian text could not include the main character’s suicide unless this death served the author’s greater utopian doctrine; for pain, without a clear purpose, would demolish the “perfect” infrastructure, as immutability as reason-less pain cannot coexist. John’s death does not directly serve Huxley’s sexual promiscuity, eugenicist caste system, or painlessness reverie, but it allows for a larger criticism of the perilous impact of depriving humans of the counterbalance for life’s pleasures.
Chapter 3: Creativity and Its Myths

Painlessness put into practice was not as fruitful as Huxley’s World State had hoped. Importantly, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Camus never tried to suppress pain’s role in life; they, in turn, pushed their readers to find ways to enjoy, work through, or recognize its prominence. Pain is a seminal element of life due to its ability to inspire creativity. Moreover, the freedom afforded by this suffering grants humans the perspective to enjoy life’s pleasures and not squander them. Allowing for creation to ease the pains of life while enhancing the pleasures of freedom, is a dance. The balancing counterparts are vital to the shared human existence. The only other ways to escape misery are either to follow the Stoics in renouncing both pain and pleasure, or by discarding one’s free will. Dostoevsky’s underground man outlines the dependence on pain for freedom: as Julia Kristeva puts it, “... the only counterbalance to despair? Artistic creation... Works of art thus lead to establish relations with ourselves and others that are less destructive and more soothing” (188). Art does not give way for the powerful to control; it crafts a space where suffering can be shared, thus minimizing the individual load. On the other hand, Huxley illustrates a painless world, where life is full of pleasure and entirely eradicated of pain, but the citizens are entirely complacent. By way of eugenicist practices, conditioning, and, most importantly, the numbing of pain with *soma*, *Brave New World*’s goal of stability is fulfilled, but at what cost?

In *Brave New World*, as Clive James notes, “the Alpha ruling élite [control] the supply of sex and drugs[. These are] the rewards by which they are consoled in their task, and by which all the lower orders down to the Epsilon semi-morons are kept in line” (James). The use of sex and
drugs submits the elites, and the “semi-morons,” to a world where freedoms have been eliminated. *Soma*, the drug in *Brave New World*, numbs the users of their pain—psychological or physical. This numbing effects of the drug, may not only surrenders people to the drug provider, but it also closes the door for the consumer to create, as the fuel for art is suffering. *Soma* has similar effects to those of modern antidepressants. The 21st century is, unlike Huxley predicted, devoid of mass eugenics, nor severely socially stratified, and emotionless; however, with the rise of power held by the pharmaceutical companies, as Elizabeth Wurtzel implies in the title of her memoir, a *Prozac Nation* is, in fact, what we have created. A state of drug-dependence that hampers creativity by taking away its power source: pain. David Foster Wallace’s novel *Infinite Jest* “was a vast investigation into America as the land of addictions: to television, to drugs, to loneliness” (Max). Aware of the detrimental results of dependence on external stimuli, David Foster Wallace also struggled with his need for and the effects of antidepressants. “He worried that it muted his emotions,” a reasonable fear, but after going off them one summer, hoping to “clean [his] brain,” he committed suicide (Max). To welcome life’s tides of suffering has the advantage to grant freedom; “…For what is a man without desires, without free will and without choice, if not a stop in an organ” (Dostoevsky 19)? As seen with David Foster Wallace’s experience, feeling, while it aids creativity, can be the sinister and deadly link between art and suffering.

Drugs—like *Soma*,\(^{21}\) Zoloft, Prozac, Wellbutrin, and Nardil\(^ {22}\)—which eases life’s pains are not simply a tool of control; they were initially created to help people who were suffering. Much like how the intentions of early eugenicists were in the spirit of enhancing the population,

\(^{21}\) The fictional drug used in *Brave New World*.
\(^{22}\) Merely some of the dozens of antidepressants available.
the effects can be wildly to the contrary. One must exert one’s freedom to feel the toothache, for if it is evaded, the underground man believes it is a way of relinquishing your humanness. If art is the byproduct of intense suffering, think of all “artistic geniuses we’ll never know, thanks to the invention of [antidepressants]. If Vincent van Gogh were on Prozac, would he have painted the way he did? Hard to say, but I’ll bet he wouldn’t have lopped off his ear” (Weiss)! Pain is an indispensable component to life’s exciting instability; but how can this be modulated to avoid the loss of life? Edvard Munch,²³ the Norwegian artist, in his diary confessed that “My fear of life is necessary to me, as is my illness. They are indistinguishable from me, and their destruction would destroy my art” (Weiss). Munch’s view on his suffering which, if dampened, would “destroy [his] art” is a bold and disturbing statement. Escaping pain is far easier than facing the need for it, and the role it plays in who we are. Julia Kristeva contends that “The artist...consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in his struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets him…” and can create thanks to it (9). Try as we may to evade its unpleasantness, pain, even if stifled, is an important part of what makes us human.

While antidepressants symbolize the suppression of feeling (pain needed for art), there are psychedelic drugs, which have the reputation of granting creativity and enriching feelings. Soma, while described as a numbing pain, also has hallucinogenic effects. In part, soma uses the illusions granted through the use of the drug to enhance the feeling of painlessness, a utopian conception which connects more to the euphoric creativity granted by psychedelic drugs like LSD, Peyote, and mushrooms, than the pharmaceutical antidepressants. Artists have always been attracted to these creativity-yielding drugs, not only due to their effects but since they are illegal, there is no larger state that controls the foreign substance affecting their bodies. This then keeps

²³ “Munch’s famous painting, The Scream, is believed to reflect the deep anxiety of modern man” (Weiss).
the freedom, diluted with the use antidepressants, intact, and the goal of stability (as established by nearly all fictional or real-life versions of the World States) defeated. This is not to say that psychedelics, in any way, serve as an exchangeable drug to antidepressants; yet, psychedelics allow for an external source to aid creativity and not submit them to a higher power, like that of pharmaceutical companies (which do not have the best interest of the people at heart). Creativity is precious and primordial for the survival of an innate humanness which it expresses.

The poet, in his creation, attempts to put into words the most precarious and delicate details of our humanness. This is at the heart of the fabrication of the myth of the suffering artist. There is nothing that connects humans more than pain. Kierkegaard in Either/Or asks a rhetorical question, “What is a poet” (19)? He comes up with the striking insight that a poet is “An unhappy person who conceals profound anguish in his heart but whose lips are so formed that as sighs and cries pass over them they sound like beautiful music” (Kierkegaard 19). Why is it so crucial for the poet to be “unhappy [and conceal]… anguish in his heart” (Kierkegaard 19)? Perhaps it is because he embodies life’s pain more than the average man. The poet, when he goes to sigh, cry, or—to use the underground man’s word—moan, is able to transcribe these noises of suffering into music. The underground man “…agree[s] that man is primarily a creative animal,” even though he fights for man’s freedom; the use of moaning, or the outward expression of a guttural form of pain, like music and creation is animalistic, pure, and authentic.

The transmutation of pain into beauty is that great paradoxical advantage that suffering produces. “It is with him [the poet] as with the poor wretches in Phalaris’s bronze bull, who were slowly tortured over a slow fire; their screams could not reach the tyrant’s ears to terrify him; to him they sounded like sweet music” (Kierkegaard 19). Phalaris was the tyrant of Akragas in Sicily, from around 488 to 472 BC. He is said to have commissioned a bronze bull in which he
burned his enemies alive. Their screams were supposed to “[represent] the animal’s bellow[s].” Kierkegaard illuminates this gruesome image by describing the “…crowd around the poet [who] say to him, ‘Sing again soon’—in other words, may new sufferings torture your soul, and may your lips continue to be formed as before…” (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica; Kierkegaard 19). The likening of the tortured souls in the belly of the bull whose screams “sounded like sweet music,” to the process of creation for the poet who, similarly, turns his pain into beautiful songs, stems from this unspoken and paradoxical ability of the poet to use suffering to create (Kierkegaard 19). Nevertheless, the fable of the suffering artist precedes even Phalaris.

As the cliché goes, there has always been a link between artists and their pain. There is something so captivating about pain that not only propels humans to create, but also to partake in it. The potential relationship between suffering and creativity has… fascinated… psychologists… for decades. The earliest and most rudimentary studies examined eminent people across fields including literature and the arts. Studies [have] found that creatives had an unusually high number of mood disorders. Charles Dickens, Tennessee Williams, and Eugene O'Neill all appeared to suffer from clinical depression. So too did Ernest Hemingway, Leo Tolstoy and Virginia Woolf. Sylvia Plath famously took her own life by sticking her head in an oven while her two children slept…. Clearly some people suffer for their art, and clearly some art stems from suffering. But it would be inaccurate to say that all creatives run the risk of mental illness. (Adams)

While not all people who suffer are artists and not all artists are mentally ill, there seems to be a clear link between these two elements of the human existence. It is also difficult, and not the most tasteful, to psychoanalyze people posthumously, especially when their artist persona may skew the results due to the pressure of embodying the suffering artist mythos, the connection between art and suffering is evident. The most beloved and treasured stories are not about happy people. As Leo Tolstoy writes in the first line of Anna Karenina, “All happy families are alike,
each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” (3). We are, in turn, captivated by the idiosyncratic suffering depicted by, for example, El Greco, Picasso’s blue period or Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. While they are infinite possibilities for forms of portraying anguish, the manifestation of depression attracts us. From this alluring representation of a pain filled life, the myth of the suffering artist came to fruition.

No artist’s life is better suited to mythification than that of Arthur Rimbaud (1854 - 1891). He was France’s “genius son” (Creekmore viii). The legend of the suffering artist supposes that Rimbaud’s early death was the culmination of a life filled with pain, but that is what made him an exceptional poet from such a young age. “Rimbaud lived in a more or less complete state of alienation from conventional patterns of behavior” (Creekmore xi). He led the public to believe that in order to hold on to his individuality and freedom, his pain had to be the muse for his poetry. “The life of the artist should be the most compelling bildungsroman of all,” but the eternal suffering which dictated much of Rimbaud’s life felt cultivated and disingenuous (Franklin). Nevertheless, through his writing, Rimbaud revealed his ability to uncover truths about the shared humanness that only he, as a poet, had access to. In a letter to Paul Demeny, Rimbaud explained that “the first task of any man who would be a poet is to know himself completely; he seeks his soul, inspects it, tests it, learns it” (Franklin). The need to “know [one]self completely” to write poetry, gives the impression that a poem is an explanation of all that is enigmatic about the human existence; to be a poet is to be able to explain life’s mysteries (a rather large burden for such a well-established myth) (Franklin).

Rimbaud led readers to believe that his construction of poetry was a way for him to “[rebel] against the bigoted, false, pretentious bourgeois life he knew[, which] burst in[to] obscenities and blasphemies in his” writing (Creekmore xi). Everything from his life’s story, to
his relationships, to his poetry was a meticulous illusion. ‘‘The Poet[,] as Rimbaud saw it[,] makes himself into a seer by a long, involved, and logical derangement of all the senses. Every kind of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself; he exhausts every possible poison so that only essence remains…’ Rimbaud intend[ed] to turn his psyche inside out, to undergo whatever spiritual, emotional, and physical tests he [could] devise” to further the illusion that gained him so much acclaim (Franklin). After a well-publicized, scandalous, and violent affair in Brussels with his former lover—where Verlaine shot him—Arthur Rimbaud, aged nineteen, ended his career. He wandered the world in the years that followed, “working odd jobs from circus cashier to African gunrunner. But he never wrote another word” (Franklin).

If poetry—the act of creation—like the myth of the suffering artist implies, were his armament against life’s pains, then why did Rimbaud stop writing at such a young age? “Normally, a poet’s work proves a useful antidote to the mythologizing tendency, but the material that Rimbaud left behind is both limited and ambiguous” (Franklin). Many readers of Rimbaud find it easier to ignore the second half of his life and focus on the creative boy-genius character he cultivated, for “no real poet... could have abandoned his art without so much as a glance back” (Franklin). Being an artist is not like other jobs if authentically taken up, where one can discard it and find a new path without feeling empty. Art, for suffering souls, is the antidote for that which is feared and yet required for its creation: pain.24

According to biographer Graham Robb, “[Rimbaud] has been resurrected as ‘Symbolist, Surrealist, Beat poet, student revolutionary, rock lyricist, gay pioneer, and inspired drug-user,’ and invoked by artists from Picasso to Jim Morrison. Yet the crucial questions about [his] life and work remain unanswered: How could he write poetry like this at such a young age? And

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24 “Every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life; they always presuppose suffering and sufferers” (Nietzsche 328).
why did he give it up” (Franklin)? It is easier to cast off the inconsistencies than face Rimbaud’s Janus existence. Rimbaud’s “poetry ranges from inspired to truly puerile; many of [his] letters contain outright lies, while other are fragmented or of dubious authenticity... revealing an almost completely unreflective and mercantile—in one word, prosaic—man,” tainting the whole corpus for other readers (Franklin). If Rimbaud was able to falsify, with certain convincibility, the sacred rhythm of articulating pain in poetry, then what does that mean for this myth and the link between pain and creativity?

In his poem “Une Saison en enfer,” Rimbaud exquisitely illustrates the suffering which guided his poetic work; yet “‘A Season in Hell,’ which would later bring him acclaim, was barely noticed at all when it was published in 1873” (Doyle). Virginia Woolf, brought into conversation in Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain*, thought that while English “which can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear, has no words for the shiver or the ache…. The merest schoolgirl when she falls in love has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her, but let a sufferer try to describe pain ...and language at once runs dry” (Scarry 4). Camus, in “The Artist and His Time,” contrary to Virginia Woolf, asks “…if we are not artists in our language first of all, what sort of artists are we” (211)? Rimbaud wholly illustrates Camus’ point, and what Nietzsche believes, that only through art—written, painted, heard, or otherwise experienced—can this innate suffering be expressed and remedied.
UNE SAISON EN ENFER

Jadis, si je me souviens bien, ma vie était un festin où s’ouvraient tous les cœurs, où tous les vins coulaient.


Je me suis armé contre la justice.

Je me suis enfui. Ô sorcières, ô misère, ô haine, c’est à vous que mon trésor a été confié !

Je parvins à faire s’évanouir dans mon esprit toute l’espérance humaine. Sur toute joie pour l’étrangler j’ai fait le bond sourd de la bête féroce.

J’ai appelé les bourreaux pour, en périsant, mordre la crosse de leurs fusils. J’ai appelé les fléaux, pour m’étouffer avec le sable, le sang. Le malheur a été mon dieu. Je me suis allongé dans la boue. Je me suis séché à l’air du crime. Et j’ai joué de bons tours à la folie.

Et le printemps m’a apporté l’affreux rire de l’idiot.

Or, tout dernièrement, m’étant trouvé sur le point de faire le dernier couac, j’ai songé à rechercher la clef du festin ancien, où je reprendrais peut-être appétit.

La charité est cette clef. — Cette inspiration prouve que j’ai rêvé !

« Tu resteras hyène... » etc., se récrie le démon qui me couronna de si aimables pavots. « Gagne la mort avec tous tes appétits, et ton égoïsme et tous les péchés capitaux. »

Ah ! j’en ai trop pris : — Mais, cher Satan, je vous en conjure, une prunelle moins irritée ! et en attendant les quelques petites lâchetés en retard, vous qui aimez dans l’écrivain l’absence des facultés descriptives ou instructives, je vous détache ces quelques hideux feuilllets de mon carnet de damné. (Rimbaud 2, 4)
TRANSLATION25

Long ago, if I remember correctly, my life was a feast where all hearts opened, where all wines flowed.

One evening, I sat Beauty on my lap. —And I found her bitter. —And I insulted her.

I armed myself against justice.

I ran away. O sorceresses, O misery, O hate, it is to you that my treasure has been entrusted!

I managed to make all human hope vanish in my mind. Upon all the joy of strangling it, I made the deafening leap of the fierce beast.

I called the executioners, to bite the butts of their rifles as I died. I called the plagues, to choke with the sand, with the blood. Misfortune was my god. I lay in the mud. I dried myself with the air of crime. And I played quite the tricks on madness.

And spring brought to me the dreadful laugh of the idiot.

Yet, only recently, having found myself on the point of making my last croak, I thought of looking for the key to the ancient feast, where I might recover my appetite.

Charity is this key. —This inspiration proves that I have dreamed!

“You will remain a hyena...” etc., protests the demon who crowned me with such nice poppies. “Take over death with all your appetites, and your selfishness and all the deadly sins.”

Ah! I have taken too much: —But, dear Satan, I implore you, a less irritated pupil! and while waiting for the few little cowardly lapses, you who in the writer love the absence of the descriptive or instructive faculties, I detach for you these hideous pages of my damned notebook.

25 Translated by Carmen Hatchell
Rimbaud in this poem appears to put on display the transformation of suffering into art, that made him the quintessential suffering artist. Their dependent relationship (that of his pain and his art) is shown through the image of “le démon qui me couronna de si aimables pavots/ the demon who crowned me with such nice poppies” (Rimbaud 4). Rimbaud claims “le malheur [comme son] dieu/ misfortune [as his] god” (2). This god that bestowed upon him the gift of poetic creation with which to relive his suffering, even if just momentarily. As explained in the Chronology, “Rimbaud’s life in Paris was disorderly and unstable; he lived uncleanly, took drugs and moved from one friend’s hospitality to another’s” (xii). This instability can be constructed as a springboard to creation, to suffering, to feeling! “He [was]... able to transmit (by means of poetry) this music of the universe to his fellow men, awakening them spiritually and leading them forward to social progress” (Davies-Mitchell). This romanticized view binds the poet to the so-called universality of his lines, for he must appear to know himself, and not fear his pain, in order to write and guide his readers to the antidote he has found for pain in the act of creation.

Scarry believes that “whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it endures this unsharability through its resistance to language” (4). Yet, Rimbaud’s perceived pain is what makes his work sharable and lends itself to mythologizing; language is the creative sword, with which he inspires people to fight to counterbalance life’s suffering. Much like Dostoevsky’s underground man, when Rimbaud’s “vie était un festin où s’ouvraient tous les cœurs, où tous les vins coulaient/ life was a feast where all hearts opened, where all wines flowed,” he meets Beauty, or this utopian vision of how life could be, “[il l’a] trouvée amère. —Et [il l’a] injuriée/ [he] found her bitter. —And [he] insulted her” (Rimbaud 2-5). Rimbaud, like the underground man, tries to convince us that his suffering and contempt for stability is the origin of his art, as envisioned by Huxley’s painless *Brave New World*. 
Rimbaud’s antithetical lives, even though not in line with the suffering artist mythos, are a more accurate depiction of who he was. “Camus once wrote [that] ‘to sustain the legend… [would be to turn a blind eye to Rimbaud’s duality. His duplicitous life is a] …sacrilege, as the truth sometimes is’” (Franklin). Camus points out what one does not want to hear: the uncomfortability of the truth. Camus is right to make readers aware that often what is uncomfortable, the instability of life, is the most truthful. To achieve this truth, one must both know oneself, but without self-importance; one must also share this cathartic act of creation. “To speak with God one must first give up one’s narcissism, and to give up one’s narcissism one must enter into an authentic dialogue with a fellow human being: To speak with God one must speak with humankind” (Zinker 17). God, as Zinker uses it, does not have to be the “divine creator” symbol, but rather he can act as a representation of a higher truth that guides us. Truth, in a similar way to art, gives way to critical thinking, as it confronts the crafted myth. In a way, the breaking down of the tale of the suffering artist feels sacrilegious; Preserving a belief solely because it is easier than deconstructing; however, it is a form of mauvaise foi. The preserving of a falsehood is not a lasting nor benevolent master.

Returning to Dostoevsky’s conversation with Bentham’s Panopticon-inspired structure, “in the Crystal Palace [suffering] is … unthinkable; suffering means doubt, [it] means negation…” (Kristeva 180). The act of creation is an acknowledgment of one’s suffering, which shatters the Crystal Palace that Dostoevsky’s underground man is so resistant of. Furthermore, “…the very word ‘pain’ has its etymological home in ‘poena’ or ‘punishment’” (Scarry 16). So, of course, pain is not an evident gift. The act of subverting the meaning of pain or subverting its often-paralyzing effects, thus is a re-establishment of power that those who aim to stabilize lose

26 When a person is acting in bad faith they are actively abandoning their freedom, even though they depend upon it to enact the denial.
control of. In embracing the sting of a pain, as the underground man supplicates we do, freedom has been secured; this is imperative as freedom is not a true gain if it is granted. Owing one’s freedom to another means the inherently restrictive power structure has not been toppled; thus the freedom granted is but an illusion to preserve, for example, the Crystal Palace.

I believe in the act of sharing one’s anguish, through the medium of creation, that the weight of life’s unrelenting pain can be attenuated without relinquishing one’s freedom or the experience of pleasure. The legend of the suffering artist, while useful in that it constructs a framework for pain and its use as a remedy, also simplifies their bond. In *Brave New World*, since there is no literature nor art available, there is no precedent for the suffering artist myth. The suppression of history in the World State safeguards against any such possibility of an artist arising; *soma* then obliterates suffering, or at least its effects. But creation is instinctive for our humanness. Helmholtz Watson felt the need to create; but thanks to the limiting State sanctioned lexicon he was left unable to express this yearning, let alone act upon it.

The recognition of pain keeps humans from *mauvaise foi* when preserving the myth of the suffering artist. For, as Sartre explains, “If we define man’s situation as one of free choice, in which he has no recourse to excuses or outside aid, then any man who takes refuge behind his passions, any man who fabricates some deterministic theory, is operating in bad faith” (47). It is in the inherent free will of humans, when they choose to fabricate their lives and live inauthentically, that leads them to assume bad faith. It is the paradoxical free decision to reject this unpreventable freedom from ourselves that manifests as bad faith.

In *Brave New World*, the sublimation of language serves the State’s stability as a way of negating bad faith. If *soma* numbs the recognition of “despair” and “anguish” that guides the necessary conclusion of freedom, “It is an awareness of the human condition that does not occur
all the time. That we must choose ourselves at all times is evident, but anguish and despair are hardly common emotions” (Sartre 54). That is why language is such an important aspect of *Brave New World*. Language is redirected to benefit the cause of stability. Without the ability to share or express feelings, like that of “despair” and “anguish,” it is tempting to escape the comforts of captivity by performing the denial of freedom as a way of adopting false values that momentarily console the actor. Sartre then rhetorically asks, “‘But why shouldn’t he choose bad faith?’ [His] answer is that [he] do not pass moral judgment against him, but [Sartre] call[s] his bad faith an error. …Bad faith is obviously a lie because it is a dissimulation of man’s full freedom of commitment” (47-48). The dissimulation that Sartre brings up is much like the construction of a utopia. The non-ideal is hidden or destroyed in the hopes that these false values, over time, become as close to the truth as falsehoods can be. In *Brave New World* when they undermine history to rid the people of a different social or cultural referent, they were attempting to dress falsehoods in the robes of truth. This only works, as I see it, because of the use of sleep-teaching (among other ways) which ensures complete control and the submission of the population.

The freedom to accept false values and the role of art in dismantling myths, are two sides of the same coin. In exerting the freedom to accept false values, one is acting in bad faith; but the myth of the suffering artist, which protects pain from being eradicated, is a falsehood that should be deconstructed. Yet breaking apart the time-old fable does not necessitate the destruction of the myth in its entirety. Seeing the internal framework for such a prolific tale gives greater insights into what fuels not only the archetype, but what allows for it to keep its truth intact. If it was revealed that there was no reason for the misery life brings, mass nausea and suicide would soon
follow. *Brave New World, Notes from Underground, The Gay Science*, and *La chute* help keep the mythos alive and serve to offer remedies and comfort in times of suffering.


